



## **THE SOUTHWESTERN WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Developing and Conserving the Waters of the  
SAN JUAN AND DOLORES RIVERS AND THEIR TRIBUTARIES  
IN SOUTHWESTERN COLORADO  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Southwestern Water Conservation District Urges Partners to Include the Animas River Stakeholders Group in Gold King Mine Cleanup Efforts**

DURANGO, COLORADO—Bruce Whitehead, Executive Director of the Southwestern Water Conservation District, released the following statement regarding the Gold King Mine accident:

“On behalf of the board of directors of the Southwestern Water Conservation District, I would like to express our sincere concern for the Animas River ecosystem and all the water users affected by the Gold King Mine discharge.

The District, which encompasses the drainages from Pagosa Springs to Norwood, recognizes that metal loading from abandoned and inactive mines has been one of the most significant regional water quality issues for decades. For more than 10 years, the District has provided substantial financial support to the Animas River Stakeholder Group to assist their efforts in mine remediation, including direct funding of water quality monitoring below Silverton.

The Animas River Stakeholders Group, made up of volunteer community leaders, environmental organizations, private, and public partners, has worked transparently and collaboratively for 20 years to remediate old mine sites. Their success can be seen on Mineral Creek, where the effective use of limited resources and local expertise has resulted in a notable reduction in heavy metals loading.

There’s no question this group has developed the site-specific knowledge, working relationships, and expertise to take on the water quality challenge over the long term. As communities along the Animas River and the EPA work to address the consequences of this spill, we encourage them to take advantage of the local leadership of the Animas River Stakeholders Group.”

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*The Southwestern Water Conservation District’s charter is to protect, conserve, use and develop the water resources of the Southwestern basin for the welfare of the District, and safeguard for Colorado all waters of the basin to which the state is entitled. Following this mandate, the District has assumed a broad strategic role on behalf of its diverse constituents across nine counties: Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma, San Juan, San Miguel, and parts of Hinsdale, Mineral, and Montrose.*